

Was Benedictine Monasticism Conservative? Evidence from the Sermon Collection of Jacques de Furnes, Abbot of Saint-Bertin (1230-1237) ⁽¹⁾

Johan BELAEN
Universiteit Gent

Until c. 1100, religious life was united in one *ordo monasticus*, consisting of highly independent houses where life was organised according to the *Rule of St Benedict*, supplemented by local sets of written or unwritten customs. During the course of the twelfth century, however, certain monastic groups, such as the Cluniacs, the Cistercians and the Vallombrosans, began to differentiate themselves from others by prioritising a proper disciplinary identity, which eventually led to the emergence of the so-called religious orders⁽²⁾. While most of these orders were firmly established by the end of the twelfth century, successfully managing their affiliations by means of a General Chapter (a gathering of abbots holding legislative and supervising powers), a large number of Benedictine houses remained outside of any form of supra-monastic organisation. According to traditional scholarship, this group – often referred to in historiography as the ‘Benedictine Order’ – comprised little more than communities tied by their defiant independence from these other movements, and their professed observance of the *Rule*⁽³⁾.

As recent studies have shown, several Benedictine grassroots attempts to set up supra-monastic control mechanisms proved unsuccessful. In the ecclesiastical province of Reims for example, continuous efforts by regional monastic leaders and their clerical associates to install a gathering of abbots with normative powers, between the 1130s until the early 1160s, never

(1) This research was made possible thanks to the support of the Research Foundation Flanders (FWO).

(2) On the diversification of religious life, see Giles CONSTABLE, “The Diversity of Religious Life and Acceptance of Social Pluralism in the Twelfth Century”, in Derek BEALES & Geoffrey BEST, eds., *History, Society and the Churches. Essays in Honour of Owen Chadwick*, Cambridge, 1985, p. 29-47; on the processes of shaping corporate identities in these orders, see Cécile CABY, “De l’abbaye à l’ordre: écriture des origines et institutionnalisation des expériences monastiques, XI^e-XII^e siècle”, in *Mélanges de l’École française de Rome. Moyen Âge*, vol. 115, 2003, p. 235-268.

(3) Pieter-Jan DE GRIECK, *De benedictijnse geschiedschrijving in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden (ca. 1150-1550): historisch bewustzijn en monastieke identiteit*, Leuven, 2010, p. 83-92; Philibert SCHMITZ, *Histoire de l’Ordre de Saint-Benoît*, Maredsous, 7 vol., 1942-1956, vol. 3, p. 48-59; the term ‘*ordo Sancti Benedicti*’ was only first used in papal charters during the pontificate of pope Innocent III (1198-1216). The earliest charter relating to a Benedictine house of the Reims province dates from 1198. See Cyprianus COPPENS, ed., *Cartularium Affligemense. Varia Diplomata (1105-1242)*, Hekelgem, 1969 (*Fontes Affligemenses*, 8), n° 17, p. 9; before this time, both Cluniac and non-Cluniac Benedictines were often referred to as *monachi nigri* or Black Monks. See Marek DERWICH, “Benedictines: General or Male”, in William JOHNSTON, ed., *Encyclopedia of Monasticism*, Chicago-London, 2 vol., 2000, vol. 1, p. 136.

brought forth an institution with the full legal status of a General Chapter. A second initiative (1169/1170) did lead to a self-declared *capitulum generale*, which in reality acted exclusively as a conflict-handling tool⁽⁴⁾. Other Benedictine experiments are attested in Saxony (1149) and in the province of Rouen (1210), although the source records suggest that they were both short-lived⁽⁵⁾.

Incited by these failures and a belief in the order as an institutional role model, the papacy itself eventually intervened in the process of Benedictine institutionalisation. At the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, Pope Innocent III (1198-1216) instructed the Black Monks of every province in the Latin West to organise General Chapters in the presence of two Cistercian abbots once every three years⁽⁶⁾. This ambitious reform programme was pursued and developed by Innocent's immediate successors. Whereas Pope Honorius III (1216-1227) stuck closely to the original plan by encouraging the holding of General Chapters, Pope Gregory IX (1227-1241) broadened the scope of the reforms and introduced a constitutional document entitled *Statuta monachorum nigrorum*⁽⁷⁾. The first version of these *Statutes* was issued in 1235, followed by a second edition, renamed *Ordinationes monachorum*

(4) Steven VANDERPUTTEN, "A Time of Great Confusion. Second-Generation Cluniac Reformers and Resistance to Monastic Centralisation in the County of Flanders (ca. 1125-1145)", in *Revue d'Histoire ecclésiastique*, vol. 102, 2007, p. 47-75; ID., "The 1131 General Chapter of Benedictine Abbots Reconsidered", in *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, vol. 66, 2015, p. 715-734; ID., "The Statutes of the Earliest General Chapters of Benedictine Abbots (1131-early 1140s)", in *The Journal of Medieval Monastic History*, vol. 5, 2016, p. 61-91; Steven VANDERPUTTEN & Johan BELAEN, "An Attempted 'Reform' of the General Chapter of Benedictine Abbots of Reims in the Late 1160s", in *Revue Mabillon*, vol. 27, 2016, p. 23-48.

(5) Klemens HONSELMANN, "Eine bisher ungedruckte Urkunde des Papstes Lucius II. und die Anfänge der Provinzialkapitel der Benediktiner in Deutschland", in *Zeitschrift für vaterländische Geschichte und Altertumskunde*, vol. 82, 1924, p. 67-78; Hans-Joachim SCHMIDT, "Iuxta Morem Cisterciensium. Päpstliche Anweisungen zur Kommunikativen Koordination von Klöstern (13. Jahrhundert)", in Cristina ANDENNA et al., eds., *Die Ordnung der Kommunikation und die Kommunikation der Ordnungen 2: Zentralität: Papsttum und Orden im Europa des 12. und 13. Jahrhunderts*, Stuttgart, 2013 (Aurora, 1.2), p. 151-152.

(6) This was stipulated in canon 12. A French edition of the conciliar decrees is found in Raymonde FOREVILLE, *Latran I, II, III et Latran IV*, Paris, 1965 (Histoire des conciles Œcuméniques, 6), p. 342-386; on pope Innocent's monastic policy, see Ursmer BERLIÈRE, "Innocent III et la réorganisation des monastères bénédictins", in *Revue bénédictine*, vol. 32, 1920, p. 22-42/145-159; Michele MACCARRONE, "Le costituzione del IV Concilio Lateranese sui religiosi", in Roberto LAMBERTINI, ed., *Nuovi studi su Innocenzo III*, Roma, 1945 (Nuovi studi storici, 25), p. 1-46; and H. SCHMIDT, "Iuxta Morem Cisterciensium", *art. cit.*, p. 145-168.

(7) On pope Honorius, see U. BERLIÈRE, "Honorius III et les monastères bénédictins (1216-1227)", in *Revue belge de Philologie et d'Histoire*, vol. 2, 1923, p. 237-266 and 461-484; on the reforms of pope Gregory, destined both for the Benedictines and other religious groups, see Franz FELTEN, "Gregor IX. als Reformator von Orden und Klöstern", in *Gregorio IX e gli ordini mendicanti: atti del XXXVIII convegno internazionale, Assisi, 7-9 ottobre 2010*, Spoleto, 2011 (Atti dei Convegni della Società internazionale di studi francescani e del Centro interuniversitario di studi francescani, n. s., 21), p. 3-71.

nigrorum, which became law in 1237⁽⁸⁾. This reform marked a substantial rupture with previous papal initiatives: the Benedictine General Chapter lost its legislative powers and became an instrument that served to enforce a fixed set of rules which transcended the precepts of the *Rule*⁽⁹⁾.

Scholars agree that, in the end, these reforms met with little success. General Chapters were soon held on an irregular rather than annual basis, while the legal force of the papal *Statutes* was gradually weakened by the dispensations granted by both Pope Gregory and his successors, often to many houses at the same time⁽¹⁰⁾. Until now, this development has always been represented in scholarship as a consequence of the fiercely independent attitude which supposedly characterised the ‘conservative’ Benedictine monks. It is believed that the Benedictines’ adherence to their local customs led them to resist the *Statutes*, while their unwillingness to give up judicial

(8) Both versions of the *Statutes* are edited in Lucien AUVRAY, ed., *Les registres de Grégoire IX. Recueil des bulles de ce pape publiées ou analysées d’après les manuscrits originaux du Vatican*, Fontemoing, 3 vol., 1896-1907, vol. 2, n° 3045/3045bis, col. 317-331; according to Franz Neiske the second version came into existence after the Benedictine monks had made their comments. See ID., “Reform oder Kodifizierung? Päpstliche Statuten für Cluny im 13. Jahrhundert”, in *Archivum Historiae Pontificiae*, vol. 26, 1988, p. 71-118.

(9) In the years after 1237 the *Statutes* served as a standard checklist during visitations. Visitation reports relating to Benedictine houses of the Reims province are attested in Edmond REUSENS, ed., “Visite de l’abbaye de Vlierbeek par Jacques Pantaléon de Troyes, archidiacre de Liège”, in *Analectes pour servir à l’Histoire ecclésiastique de la Belgique*, vol. 6, 1869, p. 483-486; Cyriel VLEESCHOUWERS, ed., *De oorkonden van de Sint-Baafsabdij te Gent (819-1321)*, 2 vol., Brussels, 1990-1991, vol. 2, n° 312, p. 337-338; Françoise POIRIER-COUTANSAIS, *Les abbayes bénédictines du diocèse de Reims*, Paris, 1974 (*Gallia Monastica*, 1), p. 15-16.

(10) The obligation to assemble once every three years seems to have been respected quite well in the province of Reims until the late 1220s. The first gathering was organised in 1220 at Saint-Quentin. The statutes of this event are edited in César-Auguste HOROY, ed., *Medii aevi bibliotheca patristica: seu ejusdem temporis patrologia ab anno MCCXVI usque ad Concilii Tridentini tempora*, 6 vol., Paris, 1879-1880, vol. 3, n° 393, col. 815-818. Other meetings are attested for the years 1224, 1227, 1235 and 1236/1237. See U. BERLIÈRE, “Les chapitres généraux de l’Ordre de Saint-Benoît, II: Provinces de Mayence-Bamberg et de Salzbourg, les Écossais d’Allemagne”, in *Revue bénédictine*, vol. 19, 1902, p. 386-387. The reference to the 1227 meeting (described as a *communi capitulo*) is found in Georg PERTZ, ed., “Annales Mosomagenses”, in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica Scriptores* [hereafter MGH SS], vol. 3, 1839, p. 163. Hardly any traces can be found of General Chapters held during the second half of the thirteenth century; on the exemption privileges granted by pope Gregory, see U. BERLIÈRE, “Les chapitres généraux”, *art. cit.*, p. 388-389. A non-exhaustive list of houses which were accorded privileges by respectively pope Innocent III and Alexander IV are attested in P. DE GRIECK, *De benedictijnse geschiedschrijving*, *op. cit.*, p. 88. De Grieck’s findings were updated in J. BELAEN “*Tam in spiritualibus quam in temporalibus deformata?*” *De receptie van de pauselijke kloosterhervormingen in de Zuid-Nederlandse benedictijnenhuizen (1215-1274)*, unpublished Master’s thesis, Universiteit Gent, 2015, p. 94-100. Probably more charters are to be found in the archives of Northern French Benedictine houses.

autonomy in favour of a supra-monastic organisation led them to thwart the functioning of the General Chapters⁽¹¹⁾.

Understanding the procedures and attitudes behind the ‘failure’ of the papal reform programme requires an immense, preferably collaborative, research effort. In this paper, I would like to contribute to that process by revising the notion that Benedictine houses automatically rejected the then current transformations in ecclesiastical and monastic institutionalism. By focusing on one specific case study, namely a collection of sermons by Jacques de Furnes, abbot of the Flemish abbey of Saint-Bertin in the 1230s, it will be possible to verify the hypothesis that Benedictine leaders did not generally resist trends towards the reorganisation of monastic government, but specifically rejected the model the papacy was trying to impose on them. The argument comprises four parts. In the first section, Jacques’ profile as an abbot-preacher will be reconstructed; his own and his monks’ response to contemporary papal measures will be addressed in the second part; thirdly, Jacques’ involvement in papal monastic policy will be explained; and finally, his role in the setting up of alternative supra-monastic structures by means of confraternity agreements will be examined.

Jacques de Furnes as abbot-preacher

Manuscript 175 of the Bibliothèque d’Agglomération de Saint-Omer, which originally belonged to the Cistercian abbey in Clairmarais, includes, among other works, a collection of 136 Latin sermons written in a Gothic minuscule script characteristic of the second half of the thirteenth century⁽¹²⁾. All of these are built up around a Biblical pericope and most bear titles which refer

(11) As such, Alain Boureau has interpreted the genesis of some mid-thirteenth-century customaries as a response to the rise of prospective legislation. He states “C’est probablement la menace centralisatrice inspirée du modèle cistercien qui provoqua la rédaction de certains coutumiers anglais”. See ID., “*Prout moris est iure*. Les moines et la question de la coutume (XII^e-XIII^e siècles)”, in *Revue historique*, vol. 303, 2001, p. 378-381, esp. p. 378; Ursmer Berlière on the other hand, described his view of ‘Benedictine particularism’ as follows: “ils [les monastères de bénédictins et de chanoines réguliers] sont [...] trop vinculés dans leur liberté par les droits des princes et des évêques, par les revendications des seigneurs, trop affaiblis par leur isolement et leur esprit particulariste, pour se résigner à admettre une autorité centrale qui les gouverne ou à jouir librement des avantages d’une confédération”. See ID., “Honorius III”, *art. cit.*, p. 246. Philibert Schmitz’ understanding of the failure of pope Gregory’s reform program is based on similar assumptions. See ID., *Histoire de l’Ordre*, *op. cit.*, vol. 3, p. 58.

(12) Saint-Omer, Bibliothèque d’Agglomération de Saint-Omer [hereafter BASO], ms. 175; this collection is described in Johannes SCHNEYER, *Repertorium der lateinischen Sermones des Mittelalters für die Zeit von 1150-1350*, 11 vol., Münster, 1969-1974 (Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie und Theologie des Mittelalters, 43), vol. 6, p. 335-342 and in *Catalogue général des manuscrits des bibliothèques publiques des départements*, 7 vol., Paris, 1846-1885, vol. 3, p. 94; only a few sermons have been edited in Gérard DE MARTEL “La collection des sermons de Jacques de Furnes: le sermon sur Ruth 1,22”, in *Sacris Erudiri*, vol. 32, 1991, p. 343-393; ID. “Les deux sermons de Jacques de Furnes en l’honneur de saint Winnoc”, in *Sacris Erudiri*, vol. 33, 1992/1993, p. 343-367; ID. “Un sermon inédit de Jacques de Furnes († 1238) pour la fête de saint Folcuin”, in *Benedictina*, vol. 44, 1997, p. 329-344; on the origin and dating of the manuscript, see ID., “La collection”, *art. cit.*, p. 343/352, n. 2.

to major events in the liturgical year – either those of the cycle of moveable feasts (*de temporale*) or important feasts of saints (*de sanctorale*)⁽¹³⁾. The major part of these texts is believed to have been drafted by Jacques de Furnes (d. 1238), during his abbacy of Saint-Bertin from 1230 to 1237⁽¹⁴⁾. Although only two sermons explicitly refer to Jacques as being the author, with titles such as *Sermo domini Iacobi quondam abbatis Sancti Bertini de passione Domini* (n° 4) and *Sermo eiusdem de eodem* (n° 5), previous studies of the collection have demonstrated convincingly that the 125 other sermons which follow these two were also compiled by the Saint-Bertin abbot⁽¹⁵⁾.

In spite of the existence of this remarkable manuscript, not a great deal is known about Jacques de Furnes. Henri de Laplane's nineteenth-century monograph on the history of Saint-Bertin abbey, which is based mainly on the abbey's cartulary and charters, gives some information on Jacques' role as manager of the abbey's goods and rights but reveals nothing about his deeds as a religious leader⁽¹⁶⁾. However, through Saint-Bertin's late-fourteenth-century chronicle, written by abbot Jean d'Ypres (d. 1383), it is known that Jacques eventually retired to the neighbouring Cistercian abbey in Clairmarais (located a couple of kilometres north-east of Saint-Bertin) in early 1237,

(13) See the list appended to this article. To avoid confusion, the numbering used here is the same as in *ibid.*, p. 357-377. For the convenience of the readers, the sermons will always be referred to by their number and if necessary by their folio numbers.

(14) The first seven sermons (f. 61va- 68va, none of which carries a number) are separated from the rest of the collection by a blank folio. Four of them have been identified, of the others the author remains unknown. The following two sermons (f. 69ra-73va, n°s 1 and 2) were written by a Franciscan brother, as can be deduced from their titles. See *ibid.*, p. 353-354, esp. n. 24; it seems that Jacob has preached during his entire abbacy. The two only datable sermons of the collection (n°s 34 and 100) can be situated respectively in the very beginning and the very end of this period, more precisely in the years 1231 and end 1236 / early 1237. The date of the first sermon can be derived from its title: *Item de dedicatione et Ascensione*. These two feast days, a fixed (the dedication of Saint-Bertin's abbey church) and a variable (Ascension Day), did only converge in a limited number of years. Knowing that the dedication of Saint-Bertin's most recent church was celebrated on the first of May (see Benjamin GUÉRARD, ed., *Cartulaire de l'abbaye de Saint-Bertin*, Paris, 1840 (Collection des cartulaires de France, 3), p. LII) the only year that qualifies is 1231 (this was calculated by means of the tables in Hermann GROTEFEND, *Taschenbuch der Zeitrechnung des Deutschen Mittelalters und der Neuzeit*, Hannover, 1922). For the date of the second sermon, see further on in part 2.

(15) The arguments in favour of this hypothesis are based primarily on the textual interrelation of the sermons (identical passages occur in multiple sermons frequently) and allusions in some titles to respectively St Bertin, the locally venerated St Folcuin, and the abbey itself (n°s 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 32, 53, 72, 75, 77, 88, 101 and 126). See G. DE MARTEL, "La collection", *art. cit.*, p. 346-351; on the growing importance of St Folcuin in the abbey of Saint-Bertin, see Steven VANDERPUTTEN & Tjamke SNIJDERS, "Stability and Transformation in the Cult of an Early Medieval Saint: the Case of Bishop Folcuin of Thérouanne († 855)", in *Studi medievali*, vol. 54, p. 131-151, especially n. 75. See also G. DE MARTEL, "Un sermon inédit", *art. cit.*

(16) Henri DE LAPLANE, *Les abbés de Saint-Bertin d'après les anciens documents de ce monastère*, 2 vol., Saint-Omer, 1854, vol. 1, p. 265-271.

where he died one year later⁽¹⁷⁾. According to Jacques Malbrancq's (d. 1653) *De Morinis et Morinorum rebus*, the former abbot of Saint-Bertin would even have been elected to lead the Cistercian abbey of Villers, but refused to accept this dignity, upon which the prior of Clairmarais was chosen⁽¹⁸⁾. Yet, the above claim is difficult to verify as Malbrancq supports this anecdote by citing a now-lost chronicle of Villers⁽¹⁹⁾. It seems reasonable to assume, however, that Jacques' personal connection with Clairmarais explains the presence of the sermon collection there. As no version of this collection has been preserved in Saint-Bertin's archives, it seems likely that either the Saint-Omer manuscript is a copy of a document Jacques himself edited during his stay at Clairmarais, or that this was done by the monks of Clairmarais on the basis of Jacques' original drafts, bearing in mind the future interest of these documents for spiritual reading practices⁽²⁰⁾.

The target audience of Jacques' sermons is clearly monastic: the listeners are often referred to as being "brothers" (*fratres*), or on some occasions even as people who have professed to the *Rule*, while the topics addressed relate to typical monastic themes, such as the danger of worldly temptations, the good works of the religious man or the need for perseverance in observing the *Rule*⁽²¹⁾. No less than five sermons within the collection are dedicated to St Benedict who significantly, in one of them, is referred to as "our blessed father" (*beatus pater noster*)⁽²²⁾. Moreover, there are indications that the sermons were initially not composed for the monks of Clairmarais. As Gérard de Martel rightly noted, the fact that some sermons bear titles which relate to feasts that were celebrated exclusively in Saint-Bertin, and that St Bertin – like St Benedict – is referred to as the listeners' "holy father" indicate that the principal audience was Jacques' own community of monks⁽²³⁾. As will be reiterated further, however, a very small number of Jacques' sermons are exceptions in that they were destined for other monastic audiences.

The recurrence of themes relating to monastic virtues or the promise of salvation indicate that Jacques' sermons belonged to the so-called 'chapter

(17) Oswald HOLDER-EGGER, ed., "Chronicon Sancti Bertini", in *MGH SS*, vol. 25, 1880, p. 840-841: *Dominus abbas noster Iacobus [...] recessit ad Claromariscum in die purificationis beate virginis anno Domini 1234*. The exact year should be 1237 instead of 1234. In fact, Jacques occurs in the charters until early 1237. In this edition of Jean d'Ypres' chronicle number 4 is mistaken for 7 several times.

(18) Jacobus MALBRANCQ, *De Morinis et Morinorum rebus*, 3 vol., Tornaci, 1654, vol. 3, p. 516. Neither Jean d'Ypres, nor the editors of *Gallia Christiana* mention the events described in this work.

(19) The only preserved chronicle of Villers, dating from the late thirteenth-century, reports the election of the prior of Clairmarais, but mentions nothing about Jacques (Georg WAITZ, ed., "Chronica Villariensis Monasterii", in *MGH SS*, vol. 25, 1880, p. 195-216). However, Édouard De Moreau presumes the existence of another, early thirteenth-century chronicle. See ID., *L'abbaye de Villers-en-Brabant aux XII^e et XIII^e siècles: étude d'histoire religieuse et économique*, Bruxelles, 1909, p. LVII-LVIII.

(20) On the use of sermons in reading practices, see Beverly KIENZLE, "The Twelfth-century Monastic Sermon", in Beverly KIENZLE & René NOËL, eds., *The Sermon*, Turnhout, 2000 (Typologie des sources du Moyen Âge occidental, 81-83), p. 271-323.

(21) G. DE MARTEL, "Un sermon inédit", *art. cit.*, p. 329; *Frater*: e.g. n° 34, f. 111ra and n° 72, f. 146va.

(22) N°s 67, 70, 77, 90 and 98; St Benedict as "our holy father": e.g. n° 70, f. 144rb.

(23) See *supra*, n. 14; St Bertin as "holy father": e.g. n° 75, f. 149ra.

sermons', which were usually pronounced by the abbot, or sometimes even a simple monk, on feast days and Sundays during the chapter office⁽²⁴⁾. The practice of chapter preaching, which served to encourage the listeners to examine their conscience before they confessed their sins and did penance, was not prescribed by the *Rule*, but was integrated in monastic customaries from the ninth century onwards⁽²⁵⁾. It is not mentioned in the thirteenth-century customary of Saint-Bertin, which relied closely on Bernard of Cluny's *consuetudines*, although this really reveals little about the preaching tradition in Jacques' abbey⁽²⁶⁾. Recent studies have argued that Saint-Bertin's adaption of the Cluniac customary was a symbolic document rather than an actual blueprint of the abbey's customs⁽²⁷⁾. Moreover, Bernard's *consuetudines* themselves remain silent about chapter preaching, even though earlier Cluniac sources clearly indicate that this practice had been common in Cluny, at least

(24) The practice of preaching in the chapter room was rooted in chapter II of the *Rule*, where it is said that the abbot should instruct his monks by means of the word. The difference between this and other sorts of monastic preaching is stressed in Teresa WEBBER, "Reading in the Refectory: Monastic Practice in England, c. 1000 - c. 1300", in http://www.academia.edu/9489001/Reading_in_the_Refectory_Monastic_Practice_in_England_c._1000-c.1300 (10 November 2015), p. 8-10. On the genre of chapter preaching in particular, see B. KIENZLE, "The Twelfth-Century Monastic Sermon", *art. cit.*; and Chrysogonus WADDELL, "The Liturgical Dimension of Twelfth-Century Cistercian Preaching", in Carolyn MUESSIG, ed., *Medieval Monastic Preaching*, Leiden, 1998 (Brill's Studies in Intellectual History, 90), p. 335-349.

(25) See T. WEBBER, "Reading in the Refectory", *art. cit.*, p. 8-10; monastic customaries which have recorded the practice of chapter preaching vary in their descriptions of the exact acts and formulas which it required. Nevertheless, they all seem to agree on one point, being that the sermon should immediately precede the penitential ritual – which was, next to the commemoration of the dead, the main activity during the chapter office. Usually, the end of the sermon is indicated by a simple *benedicite*, while the beginning of the penitential activities is announced with the words "let's talk about the order" (*loquamur de ordine nostro*). For a detailed description of the Cistercian variant, see Danièle CHOISSELET & Placide VERNET, eds., *Les Ecclesiastica Officia cisterciens du XI^e siècle: texte latin selon les manuscrits édités de Trente 1711, Ljubljana 31 et Dijon 114; version française; annexe liturgique, notes, index et tables* [hereafter EO], Reiningue, 1989 (La documentation cistercienne, 22), p. 203-211, esp. art. 37; the only original thirteenth-century Benedictine customary that has survived in the Reims province is that of Affligem. It describes the ritual sequence as follows: *Finita lectione dicit prior 'Benedicite' et subiungit 'Loquimini de ordine' [...]*. See Robert SULLIVAN, ed., "Consuetudines Affligemienses (saec. XIII)", in Giles CONSTABLE, ed., *Consuetudines benedictinae variae (saec. XI – saec. XIV)*, Siegburg, 1975 (*Corpus consuetudinum monasticarum*, 6), p. 142.

(26) Arras, Bibliothèque municipale, ms. 864 (347). This customary dates from the latter half of the thirteenth century, but seems to be copied from an early twelfth-century version. See Burkhardt TUTSCH, "Die *Consuetudines* Bernhards und Ulrichs von Cluny im Spiegel ihrer handschriftlichen Überlieferung", in *Frühmittelalterliche Studien*, vol. 30, 1996, p. 285-286.

(27) The impact of Cluniac customaries on the daily life in Benedictine houses which possessed them is discussed in Steven VANDERPUTTEN, "Monastic Reform, Abbatial Leadership and the Instrumentation of Cluniac Discipline in the Early Twelfth-century Low Countries", in *Revue Mabillon*, vol. 23, 2012, p. 59-65.

since the tenth century⁽²⁸⁾. In other words, it is more than likely that Jacques' predecessors had likewise preached to their monks, without having left any traces of such activities.

In general, Benedictine sermon collections are very rare⁽²⁹⁾. Only two other examples from the Reims province are known: the collection of abbot Geoffroy of Saint-Thierry (d. 1121) and an anonymous late-twelfth-century manuscript belonging to the abbey of Saint-Amand⁽³⁰⁾. What is more, the majority of the collections that have survived can be attributed to Cistercian authors, like Bernard of Clairvaux, Isaac of Stella, Aelred of Rievaulx or Hélinand of Froidmont⁽³¹⁾. This significant presence of Cistercian authorship in the source records can be primarily explained by 'new monasticism's' unusual interest in the 'inner life' of the monk⁽³²⁾. While around the year 1100 the need for preaching in chapter was still subject to debate, the belief that this practice was indispensable for an effective penitential ritual became more and more common among twelfth-century reform-minded groups⁽³³⁾.

(28) Marquard HERRGOTT, ed., "Bernardi Ordo Cluniacensis", in ID., ed., *Vetus disciplina monastica*, Paris, 1726 [repr. Siegburg, 1999], p. 136-364. Cluniac chapter preaching is attested in Kassius HALLINGER, Maria WEGENER & Candida ELVERT, eds., "Cluniacensium antiquorum redactionis principales saec. X/XI/XII (BB1B2GC)", in K. HALLINGER, ed., *Consuetudines Cluniacensium antiquiores cum redactionibus derivatis*, Siegburg, 1983 (*Corpus consuetudinum monasticarum*, 7.2), p. 27.

(29) In fact, Benedictine sermons often figure in large compilations instead of proper collections. As a result, many Benedictine preachers today remain anonymous. Yet, some have been identified by Jean Leclercq. See ID., "Prédicateurs bénédictins aux XI^e et XII^e siècles", in *Revue Mabillon*, vol. 33, 1943, p. 49-73 ; and ID., "Recherches sur d'anciens sermons monastiques", in *Revue Mabillon*, vol. 36, 1946, p. 1-14.

(30) Geoffroy's collection is preserved in Reims, Bibliothèque municipale, ms. 581 (F. 471). See J. SCHNEYER, *Repertorium*, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 159-164; the Saint-Amand manuscript is located in Valenciennes, Bibliothèque municipale, ms. 202 (194). See *ibid.*, vol. 6, p. 342-354.

(31) To get an overview, see the editions annexed to B.M. KIENZLE, "The Twelfth-Century Monastic Sermon", *art. cit.*

(32) According to Giles Constable "a growing desire for a personal relationship to God, Who was more interested in people's thoughts and motives than in their actions" led to a "growing and institutionalized concern with confession and penance" during the course of the twelfth century. ID., *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century*, Cambridge, 1996, p. 263-271.

(33) From Guibert of Nogent's (d. 1124) *Liber quo ordine* it appears that in the years around 1100 a significant number of monastic leaders was convinced of the fact that chapter preaching contradicted the precept to not live a *vita activa*. See Trudy LEMMERS, *Guibert van Nogents Monodiae: een twaalfde-eeuwse visie op kerkelijk leiderschap*, Hilversum, 1998 (*Middeleeuwse studies en bronnen*, 60), p. 157, esp. n. 47; the growing tendency to integrate sermons in penitential practices is also visible in late twelfth-century works concerning the penance of lay people. See Roberto RUSCONI, "De la prédication à la confession: transmission et contrôle de modèles de comportement au XIII^e siècle", in André VAUCHEZ, ed., *Faire croire. Modalités de la diffusion et de la réception des messages religieux du XII^e au XV^e siècle. Table ronde organisé par l'École française de Rome (Rome, 22-23 juin, 1979)*, Rome, 1981 (*Collection de l'École française de Rome*, 51), p. 67-85.

Thus, the Cistercians paid particular attention to the quality of their abbots' preaching abilities⁽³⁴⁾.

Until now, it has been unclear how great an impact this revitalisation of the chapter sermon in the Cistercian movement had in Benedictine circles. Yet, the Saint-Omer manuscript reveals that Jacques was well acquainted with this emerging tradition. In fact, there are indications that he used the sermons of Bernard of Clairvaux as models while preparing his own: besides occasional quotations in his sermons, there exists an early-thirteenth-century copy of Bernard's complete sermons from Saint-Bertin's library⁽³⁵⁾. More generally speaking, it seems that Benedictine chapter preaching in the early-thirteenth-century province of Reims had become rooted in a Bernardian text tradition. The abovementioned sermon collection of Saint-Amand, for example, constitutes a unique mix of original sermons drafted by abbots or monks of this house (one of them is entitled *De S. Amando*), and others that can be attributed to Peter of Celle and Bernard of Clairvaux⁽³⁶⁾. In addition, a further copy of Bernard's complete sermon collection was found in the abbey of Anchin – the composition of which strongly resembles that of the Saint-Omer manuscript – while partial collections deriving from different manuscript traditions have survived in the library collections of Affligem, Saint-Thierry in Reims and Saint-Vaast⁽³⁷⁾. Although the ownership of such manuscripts does not necessarily imply that these were intended as models for preparing sermons – they could have served as mere spiritual literature – locally, the examples of Saint-Bertin and Saint-Amand show that this is quite likely.

The composition of Jacques' sermon collection does not simply reveal the way in which new conceptions of religious life had penetrated Benedictine culture in the decades around 1200. It also exposes how the abbot of Saint-Bertin and his monks dealt with the-then current transformations in monastic institutionalism. In concrete terms, the Saint-Omer manuscript includes a handful of sermons which do not match to the classic chapter sermon in terms of typology, especially as regards the contents and targeted audience. These are: what is referred to here as a 'deliberative chapter sermon'; another

(34) The White Monks' concern with the quality of preaching is demonstrated through a late twelfth-century statute which reminds the individual communities that, for the sake of properly educating their fellow brothers, all candidate abbots should be sufficiently trained in the preaching of God's Word. See C. WADDELL, "The Liturgical Dimension", *art. cit.*, p. 343; also, the fact that the papacy relied on Cistercians to combat the heresies in Southern France suggests that they were regarded as being exceptionally skilled in the proclaiming of the Word. On this topic, see Beverly M. KIENZLE, *Cistercians, Heresy and Crusade in Occitania: 1145-1229. Preaching in the Lord's Vineyard*, York, 2001.

(35) E.g. n° 25, f. 102rb and 54, f. 128rb. I have not systematically listed the references made to Bernard (or any other medieval author), but sure there are to be found more in this collection, though probably not always in an explicit manner; on the manuscript containing Bernard's sermon collection (Saint-Omer, BASO, ms. 139), see Henri ROCHAIS & Jean LECLERCQ, "La tradition des sermons liturgiques de S. Bernard", in *Scriptorium*, vol. 15, 1961, p. 256.

(36) J. SCHNEYER, *Repertorium*, *op. cit.*, vol. 6, p. 349, n° 102 (for the sermon on St Amand).

(37) The manuscript traditions of the Bernardian sermon collections have been listed in H. ROCHAIS & J. LECLERCQ, "La tradition", *art. cit.*

one rendered on the occasion of a Benedictine General Chapter; and a series of sermons which were addressed to religious communities other than Saint-Bertin. The importance of these very distinct sources for evaluating the Benedictines' stance regarding early-thirteenth-century organisational developments is examined below.

The reception of the 1230s' reforms in the community of Saint-Bertin

Although the resistance of Benedictine houses to Pope Gregory's *Statutes* is readily demonstrated by the existence of exemption privileges agreed in the period 1230-1254, the Benedictine leaders' exact motives for requesting these remain largely unknown⁽³⁸⁾. From the province of Reims, just one contemporary testimony has survived, namely the chronicle of Guillaume (d. 1234), abbot of the monastery of Andres. However, this narrative only discusses events of 1232, when a number of exempted Benedictine abbeys were visited by papal officials, and statutes were drafted for both the Cluniacs and the Premonstratensians. The chronicle makes no reference to the *Statutes* destined for the Black Monks simply because Guillaume died one year before the proclamation of their first version⁽³⁹⁾. To this day, the motives behind the Benedictines' response to the papal *Statutes* remain subject to speculation.

Sermon n° 100 in Jacques' collection is exceptional in that it does offer some insight into the Benedictines' way of thinking⁽⁴⁰⁾. At first sight, it would appear of little interest: besides lacking a title, it is also one of the briefest sermons in the entire collection. Nevertheless, it includes an unusual series of historical references that offer an extraordinary glimpse of the manner in which the *Statutes* were received in the community of Saint-Bertin. The sermon opens with Ecclesiasticus 22:19-20: "A wooden beam firmly bonded into a building is not loosened by an earthquake; so the mind firmly resolved after due reflection will not be afraid in a crisis"⁽⁴¹⁾. In the following lines, Jacques clarifies how this introductory verse must be understood: the building stands as a symbol of religious life, while the wooden beams holding it together represent the religious men and Christ embodies the fundaments on which everything is build⁽⁴²⁾. According to Jacques the wood can only be united when there is "concord", leading to a stable building held together by

(38) See U. BERLIÈRE, "Les chapitres généraux", *art. cit.*, p. 388-389; P. DE GRIECK, *De benedictijnse geschiedschrijving*, *op. cit.*, p. 88; and J. BELAEN, *De receptie*, *op. cit.*, p. 94-100.

(39) Johann HELLER, ed., "Chronicon Andrensis", in *MGH SS*, vol. 24, 1879, p. 771; on these events see also Anselme DIMIER, "Les statuts de l'abbé Matthieu de Foigny pour la réforme de l'abbaye de Saint-Vaast (1232)", in *Revue bénédictine*, vol. 65, 1955, p. 110-125.

(40) N° 100, f. 168rb-168vb.

(41) *Ibid.*, f. 168rb: [*S*]icut loramentum ligneum colligatum fundamento aedificii non dissolvetur, sic cor confirmatum in cogitatione consilii. Cogitatus sensati in omni tempore vel metu depravabitur; trans. from Michael COOHAN et al., eds., *The Oxford Annotated Bible*, Oxford, third edition, 2001, p. 130 (apocrypha).

(42) *Ibid.*: Aedificium est religio, cuius fundamentum est Christus. Ligna viri religiosi maxime praelati [...] Loramentum ligneum dicitur coniunctio plurium lignorum ad invicem colligatorum, per quam coniunctionem intellegitur corpus religionis id est congregatio religiosorum.

a “bond of love”⁽⁴³⁾. From this he concludes that when religious men are torn apart of discord, they should hold on to the fundament: Christ⁽⁴⁴⁾. Only by reflecting on the fundamentals of their faith will they be able to reach eternal life⁽⁴⁵⁾. In so doing, these religious men must not follow their heart blindly, but rather let it be assisted by good counsel⁽⁴⁶⁾. Subsequently, Jacques lets his monks know that they should themselves hold counsel⁽⁴⁷⁾. He clarifies on what precisely they should deliberate by cryptically referring to a critical event which occurred during his abbacy. More specifically, Jacques reminds his monks of a recent softening of punishments that had previously been imposed on them by the abbot of Saint-Denis (a house of regular canons located in the city of Reims) “and his colleagues”⁽⁴⁸⁾. According to Jacques this act of mercy should lead the monks to reflect on the further execution of what he calls the “papal charge”. He also adds that, in the future, “those monks who will have a guilty conscience should ask for excommunication and consult others that will have been wise”⁽⁴⁹⁾.

Having finished this Biblical commentary, Jacques moves on to the second part of his sermon, explaining that his community should deliberate on three topics, the most urgent in his eyes being a pending procedure at the Roman Curia⁽⁵⁰⁾. The exact nature of this procedure is not made explicit, but Jacques believes that it should be aborted as soon as possible so that the Saint-Bertin abbey would not suffer financial damage and any potential scandals would be avoided⁽⁵¹⁾. Secondly, he thinks a discussion must be held on “the regulations the Pope has made for the Benedictine Order”⁽⁵²⁾. In particular, he wants to prevent any rebellious actions which would, “once again”, result in the abbey falling into the hands of “cruel and foreign lords”⁽⁵³⁾. In Jacques’ eyes, a “schismatic” attitude from the part of the monks would not only affect “the

(43) *Ibid.*: *Loramentum id est coniunctio istorum lignorum ecce Concordia per quam omnia indissolubiliter conservantur sicut loramentum colligatum f[undamento] e[dificii] non dissolvetur hoc autem loramentum colligatur vincula caritatis, de quo dicit Apostoli ad collossenses: Super omnia caritatem habentes in vobis quid est vinculum perfectionis [Col. 3 :14].*

(44) *Ibid.*: *Aliter sicut ligna colligantur ad unum lignum, ita religioso qui transplantati sunt sicut dicit Iesus: adherent lignum crucis [...].*

(45) *Ibid.*: *[...] sanctus religiosus adherens lignum cum perveniet ad portum eterne salutis.*

(46) *Ibid.*: *[...] Nihil valent cogitationes nisi consilio roborentur.*

(47) *Ibid.*, f. 168va: *Videamus igitur in quibus consilium nobis est necessarium ad presens et non sequantur unusquisque pravitatem cordis sui [...].*

(48) *Ibid.*: *Primum igitur quod pre manibus habemus cum de relaxatione sententie quam tulerunt in nos, abbas Denisus et collige sui.*

(49) *Ibid.*: *De hoc satis habere consilio ut scilicet mandatum apostolicum procedamus et qui se noverint habere conscientias oneratas excommunicationem quaerunt, qui sapienter agent et sue consulunt honestati.*

(50) *Ibid.*: *Sicut mihi videtur tria praecipue sunt super quibus ad praesens consilio indigemus [...].*

(51) *Ibid.*: *Primum et quod magis urgens est de expensis factis in prosecutione negotii nostri tam in curia Romana quam in partibus istis, ut ita solvantur ad terminum, quod non incurramus dampnum [...] et non oriatur scandalum [...].*

(52) *Ibid.*: *[...] Ordinationibus quas fecit dominus papa in ordine nostro, quam mittuntur nobis ut eas faciamus observari.*

(53) *Ibid.*: *Unde super hiis provideamus nobis ne per defectum nostram iterum tradamur in manus dominorum crudelium, dominorum alienorum.*

reputation of the monastery” but also that of the whole “Benedictine Order”. This in turn could “result in a scandal before the Pope and the clerical order”, which, according to Jacques, “would be an even bigger mistake than the previous one”⁽⁵⁴⁾. Finally, the third topic Jacques wants to discuss are the novelties of which the community has been informed by representatives of the abbey residing at the Roman Curia⁽⁵⁵⁾.

As the above summary shows, the structure of sermon n° 100 differs slightly from that of a ‘classic’ chapter sermon. Essentially, it is still a commentary on a Biblical pericope, but the usual allusions to the difficulties of monastic life are replaced by an exhortation on the need for both reflection and deliberation. The sermon actually appears to be a sort of introduction to a discussion on the external affairs of the Saint-Bertin monastery. In the final lines of his sermon, Jacques refers to a series of novelties which seem to have given rise to this deliberative chapter meeting. Presumably, these novelties were originally passed on in the form of letters, but unfortunately none of them have survived⁽⁵⁶⁾. Nonetheless, with the help of certain documentary sources, the specific context wherein sermon n° 100 originated can be partially elucidated.

It is clear that the principal aim of Jacques’ sermon was to convince his monks to stop a certain appeal procedure which he feared the papacy would see as a rebellious action. As mentioned before, in the text Jacques does not specify the nature of this procedure, although his main objection seems to have been that it would provoke a scandal. In making this argument, he repeatedly reminds his monks of a traumatic past event which he never fully describes. However, these vague allusions to the monks’ “schismatic” attitude, a “previous mistake” and the punishments applied by the abbot of Saint-Denis can all be related to a papal charter dated 8 October 1236. This charter, which is acknowledged through the papal registers, describes how Pope Gregory, at the request of Jacques, ordered the dean of Furnes to mitigate the punishments which the community of Saint-Bertin had incurred as result of its disobedience to the papal *Statutes*⁽⁵⁷⁾. By referring to this event, Jacques implicitly indicates that the appeals procedure which he wants to see terminated is related to the implementation of the papal reform programme.

In order to fully understand the background of the monks’ appeal procedure, the sermon should first be dated more precisely. A *terminus post quem*, namely 8 October 1236, can be derived from the papal charter,

(54) *Ibid.*: *Unde expedire honori nostro et totius ordinis ut super hiis idem dicamus omnes sicut dicit apostoli ad Corinthios ‘et non sint in vobis scismata’* [1 Cor, 1:10], *ne de nobis exeat scandalum in papo et in clero et sit novissimus error peior priore.*

(55) *Ibid.*, f. 168va-168vb: *Tertium et ultimum est quod sicut intelleximus a nuntiis nostris qui fuerunt in curia et etiam ab aliis Dominus papa et cardinalis.*

(56) The practice of discussing important letters from worldly or ecclesiastical dignitaries during the chapter office is attested in EO, *op. cit.*, p. 207, art. 63-64.

(57) L. AUVRAY, ed., *Les registres*, ed. cit., vol. 2., n° 3343, col. 488: *Decano Sanctae Walburgis Furnensis, petente abbate Sancti Bertini, mandat quatenus quamdam interdicti sententiam, quam abbas Sancti Dionysii Remensis et eius collegae, occasione statutorum editorum a papa pro reformatione ordinis [Nigri] et observantia regulari, post appellationem legitimam ad Sedem Apostolicam, [in monasterium Sancti Bertini] protulerant, relaxet.*

but it does not give a *terminus ante quem*. However, a content analysis of the sermon can help to resolve this matter. First of all, Jacques' use of the word *ordinationibus*, when referring to the *Statutes*, indicates that he gave the sermon after 22 December 1236. On that day, Pope Gregory asked the Reims abbots to convoke a General Chapter during which they should formally consent to the second edition of the *Statutes* which, from then onwards, were renamed as *Ordinationes*⁽⁵⁸⁾. In the charter of 8 October 1236, they were still referred to by the term *statutorum*⁽⁵⁹⁾. Furthermore, the fact that Jacques incited his monks to reflect on their stance against the *Statutes* suggests that at the time of his speech these had not yet been declared valid in law. This only happened on 13 January 1237, when the second edition of the *Statutes* was officially published in the papal registers and the Reims abbots had given their consent⁽⁶⁰⁾. From this it can be cautiously inferred that Jacques pronounced his sermon somewhere between 22 December 1236 and 13 January 1237 and, more importantly, that the appeals procedure was somehow meant to mitigate the impact of the *Statutes*, or indeed related to an outright attempt to gain full exemption from all or part of them.

Given the timing of the sermon, the most plausible hypothesis is that the procedure concerned the request to be exempted from the precept obliging the Benedictines to transform dependencies where only one monk resided into larger communities of at least two religious men (art. 12)⁽⁶¹⁾. Already on 22 December 1236, the day on which the renewed *Statutes* (the *Ordinationes*) were sent to the Reims abbots, all monasteries in the Thérouanne diocese were granted a papal privilege which dispensed them from it⁽⁶²⁾. But if the monks of Saint-Bertin, whose abbey was located in the Thérouanne diocese, were granted this privilege as early as 22 December, then why would they still request it in a procedure that came after this date? The answer is simple: the monks of Saint-Bertin had never received the abovementioned privilege, which was exactly what bothered them. Only on the day of the official proclamation of the *Ordinationes* (13 January 1237) was the privilege extended to the abbots in the remaining dioceses within the province of Reims and "the abbot and the convent of Saint-Bertin" (*abbati et conventui Sancti Bertini*)⁽⁶³⁾. As can be derived from the sermon, the fact that the Saint-Bertin abbey was initially excluded from the privilege was a consequence of Jacques' hesitant attitude. Bearing in mind the recent papal pardon, the abbot feared that requesting such a privilege would bring disgrace to his abbey. Yet, as Jacques' insistence on the dangers of proceeding with the appeals procedure shows, a substantial part of the monastic community at Saint-

(58) *Ibid.*, vol. 2, n° 3411, col. 525-526; compare to the dating method used in Alexis CHARANSONNET, *L'Université, l'Église et l'État dans les sermons du cardinal Eudes de Châteauroux (1190?-1273)*, unpublished doctoral dissertation, Université Lumière Lyon II, 2001, p. 81, n. 249.

(59) See *supra*, n. 56.

(60) L. AUVRAY, ed., *Les registres*, ed. cit., vol. 2, n° 3442, col. 534.

(61) *Ibid.*, vol. 2, n° 3045/3045bis, col. 321-322, art. 12.

(62) *Ibid.*, vol. 2, n° 3415, col. 527; this statute, be it as part of the regulations imposed on the Cluniacs in 1232, was already criticised in the chronicle of Guillaume d'Andres. Guillaume considered the precept as one of the *oneris observationes* to which the Cluniacs were subjected. See J. HELLER, ed., "Chronicon Andrensis", ed. cit., p. 771.

(63) L. AUVRAY, ed., *Les registres*, ed. cit., vol. 2, nos 3431-3441, col. 533-534.

Bertin was willing to take the risk and challenge the implementation of the said precept.

How can such fierce opposition to a seemingly trivial regulation be explained? Most likely, it was seen as involving a weakening of the position of individual monasteries with regard to the local episcopal rulers who, in the first decades of the thirteenth century, were increasingly trying to exert their power over the regular clergy⁽⁶⁴⁾. Thus, during a council which was held in the province of Reims in August 1231, the bishops had decided that whenever they visited a monastic dependency, they would be permitted to ask information on the number of servants who resided there. What is more, they prohibited the abbots from intentionally reducing that number in those houses or leaving their positions vacant after they had died⁽⁶⁵⁾. The motive behind this regulation was to uphold the bishops' right of procuration, that is the privilege of being given lodgings and financially compensated when they visited monastic houses⁽⁶⁶⁾. By reducing the monastic populations in their dependencies, abbots hoped to avoid, or at least lower the cost of procuration, which often put a heavy burden on monastic finances⁽⁶⁷⁾.

The monks of Saint-Bertin seem to have been particularly eager in defending the integrity of their dependencies. Between December 1232 and October 1233, no less than nine charters were needed to resolve a persistent conflict over the Bishop of Théroutanne's procuration rights in the dependencies of Saint-Bertin⁽⁶⁸⁾. Yet, it seems that due to the proclamation of the *Statutes*, in particular article 12, the monks were confronted with a renewed attempt by the bishop to extend his procuration rights. In December 1235, only a couple of months after the *Statutes* had been made law, they

(64) See on this topic Cristopher CHENEY, *Episcopal Visitation of Monasteries in the Thirteenth Century*, Manchester, 1931 (Manchester University Publications. Historical Series, 58).

(65) Thomas GOUSSET, ed., *Les actes de la province ecclésiastique de Reims ou canons et décrets des conciles*, 4 vol., Reims, 1842-1844, vol. 2, p. 357-363: IV. *Visitantes inquirant utrum in loco sit debitus numerus ministrorum. [...] Sane pro certo didicimus quod quidam abbates prioratum adeo exhauriunt facultates, quod iidem prioratus debito monachorum numero defraudantur. Cum igitur non debeamus hoc sub dissimulatione pertransire, statuimus ut praelati visitationis officium exercentes, diligentes inquirant inter alia quantus debeat esse numerus servitorum; et si diminutus fuerit, abbati nuntient, ut infra mensem suppleat numerum diminutum, secundum quod possint sufficere facultates. Quod si facere noluerit, per satisfactionem bonorum vel alio modo, secundum quod praelati expedire viderint, compellatur. [...] Adiciamus etiam quod in locis ubi plures monachi consueverint esse, compellantur abbates per ordinarios, ut ibidem solitum numerum constituent monachorum, non amotis monachis, dicta loca dantes ad firmam, grangias aliquatenus redigentes.*

(66) See U. BERLIÈRE, "Le droit de procuration ou le gîte. Papes et Légats", in *Bulletin de la Classe des Lettres et des Sciences morales et politiques (de l') Académie royale de Belgique*, 1919, 509-538.

(67) As can be derived from the expression *per satisfactionem bonorum*. See *supra*, n. 64; on the burden of these expenses, see C. CHENEY, *Episcopal Visitation*, *op. cit.*, p. 104-118.

(68) Daniel HAIGNERÉ, ed., *Les chartes de Saint-Bertin d'après le Grand cartulaire de dom Charles-Joseph Dewitte, dernier archiviste de ce monastère*, 4 vol., Saint-Omer, 1886-1894, vol. 1, n^{os} 803-807, p. 361-363 / n^{os} 815-816, p. 367; L. AUVRAY, ed., *Les registres*, *ed. cit.*, vol. 1, n^o 1258, col. 710; Théodore DUCHET & Arthur DURY, eds., *Cartulaire de l'Église de Théroutanne*, Saint-Omer, 1881, n^o 166, p. 132.

requested a papal confirmation of the agreements that had been concluded earlier on episcopal procuration rights⁽⁶⁹⁾. Perhaps the menace of illegitimate episcopal visitations became more pressing after the proclamation of the *ordinationes*, which in turn would explain why the monks of Saint-Bertin – and by extension the other Benedictines in the province of Reims – did everything in their power to receive an exemption privilege in the final months of 1236.

As has been shown, only one article of the papal *Statutes* had been actively challenged by the Saint-Bertin community. In addition, this resistance was rooted in political motives, rather than ‘ideological’ ones. This raises the question as to what extent such motives could have played any role at all in the community of Saint-Bertin’s stance against the *Statutes*. Although the punishment inflicted by the abbot of Saint-Denis suggests that other articles in the papal *Statutes* had not been observed to the letter in the abbey of Saint-Bertin, the observation that none of these was (successfully) legally contested seems to indicate that the monks considered them to be less of an issue. This comes as no surprise since in reality the precepts laid down in the *Statutes* were not that innovative or harsh, as is often claimed. Many of them simply repeat classic twelfth-century monastic issues, such as the upholding of communal life (art. 1), the respect of silence in the cloister (art. 4), or the need for novices to receive a thorough education (arts. 6 and 7)⁽⁷⁰⁾. Moreover, already by the middle of the twelfth century, observance at Saint-Bertin had been subjected to changes based on these principles. This can be deduced from a letter addressed by Bernard of Clairvaux to the then-abbot of Saint-Bertin, Leonius (d. 1163), in which the latter is complimented for having subjected his monks to a “better observance” (*meliori observantia*)⁽⁷¹⁾. What exactly this implied and how successful its introduction was is unclear, but it is known that Leonius had formerly reorganised the life in the Benedictine abbey of Lobbes by adopting a Cistercian-inspired policy⁽⁷²⁾.

Could it be that the Saint-Bertin monks neglected some points in the *Statutes*, not because they adhered to a laxer, fixed set of customs, but rather because the papal precepts limited their range of actions in pursuing a proper disciplinary policy? This hypothesis is supported by the fact that, during the 1230s, the monks themselves were actually changing how they lived in their cloister much more drastically than was permitted by the papacy. Thus, in a charter dating from 1233, Pope Gregory rebukes the monks for having removed the organ from their church without their abbot’s permission⁽⁷³⁾. Whether or not the organ was eventually restored to its place, the attempt to remove it is in itself revealing as regards the monks’ openness to the latest tendencies towards monastic spirituality. Possibly, their initiative was inspired by the ideas of Aelred of Rievaulx and his followers, who heavily criticised the use of the organ during the chant because of its lack of soberness and its

(69) D. HAIGNERÉ, ed., *Les chartes*, ed. cit., vol. 1, n° 828, p. 373.

(70) L. AUVRAY, ed., *Les registres*, ed. cit., vol. 2, n° 3045/3045bis, col. 317-331; on these twelfth-century concerns see G. CONSTABLE, *The Reformation*, op. cit.

(71) H. DE LAPLANE, *Les abbés de Saint-Bertin*, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 223.

(72) See St. VANDERPUTTEN, “Monastic Reform”, art. cit., p. 63.

(73) D. HAIGNERÉ, ed., *Les chartes*, ed. cit., vol. 1, n° 810, p. 364-365.

distracting effect⁽⁷⁴⁾. The monks' plan can be interpreted in two ways: either it reveals their intention to modify liturgical practices in future, or it is a sign that the use of the organ had been in decline in Saint-Bertin abbey for quite a long time.

To summarise, Pope Gregory's *Statutes* were indeed not rigorously observed in the abbey of Saint-Bertin. This, however, does not imply that the monks in this abbey were holding on to an out-of-date interpretation of Benedictine life that was fixed in some kind of constitutional customary, let alone that they would have actively resisted the papal *Statutes* for such a reason. As shown above, the customs at the abbey were anything but static, and besides, there was interest in the most recent ideas about monastic life. Furthermore, the only attested form of active opposition against the *Statutes* was inspired by pragmatic political motives rather than by ideological ones. More importantly, perhaps, is the fact that the resistance to the *Statutes* was not as straightforward as is often believed – on the contrary, in Saint-Bertin it was the subject of intense debate between the abbot and his monks. In turn, this was a consequence of the double role which Jacques was expected to play.

Jacques as a representative of papal authority

As the analysis of sermon n° 100 has shown, Jacques was reluctant to challenge the validity of the papal *Statutes* and was keen to warn his monks against hasty opposition. It seems that he felt obliged to act as a mediator between the papacy and his own community. This attitude appears to have been partially the result of Jacques' fear of future visitations by "cruel and foreign lords", but there is an additional factor that should be considered here: by the end of 1236, the abbot of Saint-Bertin had become closely involved in papal monastic policy.

On 10 October 1236, a mere two days after Jacques had successfully convinced the pope to quash the sentence imposed on his community, he was commissioned by the latter to intervene in an abbatial election at the Benedictine abbey of Saint-Vaast. Together with the abbots of Saint-Victor (Parisian canons regular) and Foucarmont (Cistercian monks), Jacques was requested to appoint a suitable abbot, as the two candidates who had been proposed by the monks themselves were declared unqualified by the cardinal of Sainte-Sabine⁽⁷⁵⁾. The abbey of Saint-Vaast was exempted from episcopal control, which explains why Pope Gregory reserved the right to decide the outcome of the election⁽⁷⁶⁾. Still, it is remarkable that he delegated this task to the abbot of a house that had only just been favourably reinstated. Perhaps

(74) See Peter WILLIAMS, *The Organ in Western Culture, 750-1250*, Cambridge, 1993, p. 215-219.

(75) L. AUVRAY, ed., *Les registres*, ed. cit., vol. 2, n° 3342, col. 487-488.

(76) Bernard DELMAIRE, *Le diocèse d'Arras de 1093 au milieu du XIV^e siècle. Recherches sur la vie religieuse dans le nord de la France au Moyen Âge*, 2 vol., Arras, 1994 (Mémoires de la Commission départementale d'Histoire et d'Archéologie du Pas-de-Calais, 31), vol. 1, p. 182-183.

the assignment to elect an abbot in Saint-Vaast should be considered as a reward offered to Jacques for his efforts to keep his community in check.

Jacques' rise to prominence as a papal agent is illustrated by a sermon (n° 55) that he preached at one of the Benedictine General Chapters in the province of Reims⁽⁷⁷⁾. The exact date of this sermon is unknown, but there are reasons to believe that it must be situated in the later years of Jacques' abbacy. No General Chapters are attested between 1230 and 1234 (which might have been a period of inactivity), and the Chapter which took place in 1235 was presided by the abbots of Saint-Denis and Montier-en-Der. Therefore, it seems likely that the sermon was pronounced on the occasion of a later Chapter meeting. The most plausible option is that Jacques was appointed president of the Chapter by the end of December 1236 and maintained this position until the beginning of 1237. This would explain why the abbots of Théroutanne – who obviously belonged to the group of Jacques' closest companions – were granted the privilege concerning the dependencies as early as 22 December 1236, the exact same date on which Pope Gregory IX asked the Reims abbots to organise another Chapter meeting⁽⁷⁸⁾. This leads to believe that Jacques was summoned to the papal court in December 1236 in order to be appointed leader of the General Chapter, and that, while being there, he negotiated the request of his colleagues. Jacques' privileged position as president of the General Chapter in the weeks surrounding the turn of 1236 also explains why he was initially reluctant to request such a dispensation for his own abbey.

Unfortunately, nothing is known about the exact number of meetings that took place under Jacques' leadership, nor about their proceedings or participants⁽⁷⁹⁾. Moreover, the contents of sermon n° 55 remain rather vague about the purpose of that particular meeting. The sermon is built around Proverbs 24:27, "Prepare your work outside, get everything ready for yourself in the field; and after that build your house"⁽⁸⁰⁾. Jacques sees a metaphor in this pericope for the way abbots "must behave both inside and outside their cloister"⁽⁸¹⁾. According to Jacques, the success of this objective depends on the manner in which the abbot guides his community during the three developmental stages of a field used as building site⁽⁸²⁾. The first stage is the preparatory work, which mainly consists in deliberation. The abbot must consider what exactly his task implies and how it is best fulfilled⁽⁸³⁾.

(77) N° 55, f. 129ra-129vb.

(78) See *supra*, n. 62.

(79) However, the occurrence of the *Ordinationes* in thirteenth-century manuscripts belonging to the abbeys of Saint-Amand (Valenciennes, Bibliothèque municipale, ms. 284 (274), f. 21r-23v) and Saint-Sépulcre (Cambrai, Médiathèque de l'agglomération de Cambrai, ms. 253 (243), f. 25r-27v) may be seen as a proof of their attendance. See U. BERLIÈRE, "Les chapitres généraux", *art. cit.*, p. 389, n. 2.

(80) N° 55, f. 129ra: [*pr*]aepara foris opus tuum et diligenter exerce agrum ut postea aedifices domum tua; trans. from M. COOHAN, ed., *The Oxford Annotated Bible*, ed. cit., p. 934.

(81) *Ibid.*: Salomon noster monasteriorum patres hiis verbis instruit eleganter qualiter in exterioribus et in interioribus debeant se habere.

(82) *Ibid.*: Foris praeparat opus suum [...] Agrum suum excercius [...] Domum suam edificat [...].

(83) *Ibid.*: Prepara foris opus taliter hoc est praepara in mente consilio et deliberatio.

He must take the *Rule* as a guideline and never doubt its authority when difficult situations arise⁽⁸⁴⁾. Thus, the abbot becomes an enthusiastic leader dedicated to the welfare of his community. Secondly, the abbot is supposed to cultivate his fields. He must take heed of his profession as a monk and lead an exemplary life himself⁽⁸⁵⁾. At the same time, he must retain the focus on his community by being provident and avoiding contentment. If the abbot stops cultivating his land in the right way, the house he wants to erect on it will never be built⁽⁸⁶⁾. In the third and final stage, the abbot must eventually build his house “by using his monks as if they were living stones”⁽⁸⁷⁾. The ultimate challenge, Jacques believes, is to keep the building from collapsing, by continuing to correct those monks who neglect the *Rule*⁽⁸⁸⁾.

As this summary shows, the principal aim of the sermon was to remind the abbots attending the meeting of the duties they ought to fulfil as pastoral leaders of their community. In late 1236 this element might have been particularly relevant as this period was characterised by discussions on the contents of the renewed *Statutes*⁽⁸⁹⁾. Doubtlessly, this was also subject of debate during the meeting on which sermon n°55 was pronounced. In this respect, it is rather surprising that the sermon does not explicitly mention the *Statutes* or *Ordinationes* anywhere. Perhaps Jacques’ reminder to the abbots that the *Rule* should be upheld must be interpreted as an encouragement to take in hand the papal legislation, but this passage can equally be read as a more general statement about the danger of neglecting the abbatial duties.

Whatever had been decided at the Chapter meeting(s) presided by Jacques, and whatever this abbot’s personal opinion about the *Ordinationes* might have been, it is clear that his presidency over the General Chapter forced him to be a defender, not just of his own abbey’s interests but also of those of the papacy. Still, given the fact that the monks of Saint-Bertin had disobeyed the *Statutes* under Jacques’ abbacy, the question remains why Pope Gregory had given this particular abbot a leading role in monastic supervisory politics. The answer – which will be the subject of the last part of this article – is as surprising as it is obvious: in the course of his seven-year abbacy, Jacques had gained significant experience as a coordinator of regional monasticism.

(84) *Ibid.*, 129ra: *Ita igitur praeparemus foris opus nostrum ut opera ipsa in exterioribus sint sine scrupulo reprehensionis regula sapientiae gubernata.*

(85) *Ibid.* 129rb: *Nam secundam sumus abbates non ideo non monachi professione, accedens prelationem professionem monachi non exclusit.*

(86) *Ibid.*, 129rb-129va: [...] *sed pigri es totum occupabunt urticae et spine sicut habetur in Proverbia XXIII scilicet ‘per agrum hominis pigri transivi et per vineam viri stulti et ecce totum releverant urticae operuerant superficiem eius spinarum’* [Prov., 24:30-31]. *Utque enim pruritus carnalium corruptarum et spine peccatorum totum repletum sed non exertuit agrum suum non solum in se ipso sed etiam in aliis malo exemplo; Ibid.*, 129va: [...] *exercere] a[grum] t[uum] ut postea edifices domum tuam ut spiritualis edificio in altum surgat.*

(87) *Ibid.*: *Ista bene edificantur cui ex ipsis viris religioni edificantur tamquam ex lapidibus vivis.*

(88) *Ibid.*, f. 129vb: *Quod Secundam edificata est vel tuo labore vel alterius : eam in suo statu studeas conservare qui non minor est virtus et cetera [...] Sit igitur unicuique nostrum diligens studium circa commissam sibi arborem fodere frequenter et mittere finium, ne secundam in ea fructus inventus non fuerit excidatur et in ignem mittatur.*

(89) See *supra*, part II.

Jacques' role in the coordination of regional monasticism

As mentioned above, Jacques was very active as a preacher outside his community and the General Chapter. Thus, he preached in front of at least seven monastic communities besides his own⁽⁹⁰⁾. They were all situated in the province of Reims, although they did not belong to the same religious order. Only three were Benedictine monasteries (Saint-Remi, Saint-Winnoc and Affligem), the others were Cistercian (Les Dunes, Cercamp, Ourscamp), except for the abbey of Mont-Saint-Éloi, which was an independent community of canons regular. Besides this remarkable spiritual variety, the group of houses shows little geographical coherence. Whereas four monasteries can be considered as being situated in the vicinity of Saint-Bertin (Bergues-Saint-Winnoc and Les Dunes in the coastal region of the Thérouanne diocese; Cercamp in the northern part of the Amiens diocese; and Mont-Saint-Éloi in the rural area around Arras), the abbey of Affligem was located some 150 kilometres further east, while the houses of Ourscamp and Saint-Remi were situated in the extreme south of the ecclesiastical province.

A closer look at the content of the aforementioned sermons reveals that these were rendered during the chapter office as part of the penitential ritual, just like those addressed to the monks of Saint-Bertin. References to carnal temptations, the promise of salvation and the need for perseverance in adhering to the *Rule* are frequently addressed in all seven sermons. Yet, the clearest evidence for such a penitential context may be the sermon addressed to the monks of Les Dunes, in which Jacques first cites James 4:8, concerning the purification of sinners, and subsequently reflects on the link between preaching and penance, saying: "Therefore there ought to be noises in religious life, so that there would be frequent confession and not the least sin would lead to a guilty conscience"⁽⁹¹⁾.

Jacques was far more involved in the penitential rituals of the aforementioned communities than these sermons' contents might suggest. From the most detailed description of medieval monastic chapter rituals known today, included in the Cistercians' *Ecclesiastica Officia*, it appears that the preacher's task was more than the mere rendering of a sermon. In fact, the preacher was actually supposed to lead the penitential ritual. For this reason, he is often referred to as "he who holds the chapter" (*qui tenet capitulum*). Further references to the person "holding the chapter" in monastic customs reveal that he not only supervised the liturgical part of the penitential process, but also determined which penalties were to be imposed. After the sermon was finished, only he was permitted to speak and in so doing could question the monks about the transgressions they had

(90) See n^{os} 25, 35, 50, 51, 52, 54 and 58; three more sermons – n^{os} 56, 57, 76 – are entitled *ad religiosos*, which could signify that these were likewise rendered in front of religious communities other than Saint-Bertin.

(91) N^o 54, f. 128rb: *Debet ergo esse sonoritas in religio, ut et peccatorum confessio frequentetur ut nec minima peccata in conscientia relinquantur [...]*.

made, leading them to confess their sins and ask for forgiveness⁽⁹²⁾. In other words, the preacher acted as a judge, endowed with a certain moral – if not legal – authority.

Thus, the conclusion is that Jacques' visits to the abovementioned houses were actually interventions which allowed him to take the place of the hosting abbot, thereby interfering in what can be called the heart of internal government – the chapter ritual⁽⁹³⁾. This is remarkable since, in principle, Jacques had no legal authority over communities other than his own, especially not over those belonging to the Cistercian Order. Strictly speaking, Jacques' preaching activities contradicted the principle that order-affiliated houses were subjected exclusively to internal visitations directed by a General Chapter⁽⁹⁴⁾. As for the Benedictine houses (and Mont-Saint-Éloi), it could be argued that Jacques did actually hold the formal mandate of *visitor* which, in theory, he could have received during the aftermath of the General Chapter(s) over which he had presided⁽⁹⁵⁾. Still, since Jacques had abdicated on the Feast of the Purification of 1237 (just three months after his promotion to president of the Chapter) this interpretation appears somewhat problematic⁽⁹⁶⁾.

An explanation which covers the whole of Jacques' exterior preaching activities is that these were not justified by the latter's position as president

(92) EO, *op. cit.*, p. 205, art. 47: *Tenenti capitulum eumque interroganti 'quid dicitis': respondeat prostrates 'mea culpa' [...]*; see also R. SULLIVAN, "Consuetudines Affligemienses", *ed. cit.*, p. 142-146; the same practices can be found in Gilles Li Muisis' (d. 1353) description of the late-thirteenth century chapter rituals in the abbey of Saint-Martin de Tournai. For a short summary, see Albert D'HAENENS, *L'abbaye Saint-Martin de Tournai de 1290 à 1350. Origines, évolution et dénouement d'une crise*, Louvain, 1961 (Recueil de Travaux d'Histoire et de Philologie, 4^e série, 23), p. 47-48.

(93) It should be noted that the visitors in the Cistercian Order were likewise expected to lead the chapter office. In so doing, they informed on the state of the community by asking the monks questions. This prescription is first found in the mid-twelfth-century *Instituta*, under the heading *De forma visitationis*. See Chrysogonus WADDELL, *Twelfth-Century Statutes from the Cistercian General Chapter. Latin Text with English Notes and Commentary*, Cîteaux, 2002 (Studia et documenta, 12), p. 544-545. See also Marcel PACAUT, "La visite, institution fondamentale du régime cistercien", in Stephanie HAARLÄNDER, ed., *Vita Religiosa im Mittelalter. Festschrift für Kaspar Elm zum 70. Geburtstag*, Berlin, 1999 (Ordensstudien, 13), p. 183-191. Cistercian 'visitation sermons' have not been preserved, but there is another series of sermons which indicate that preaching, the presiding of chapter offices, penitential rituals and visitations were interrelated. These sermons were drafted by Robert Grosseteste (d. 1253), who as bishop of Lincoln, addressed the religious communities he visited. See James GINTHER, "Monastic Ideals and Episcopal Visitations: the Sermo ad Religiosos of Robert Grosseteste", in Carolyn MUESSIG, ed., *Medieval Monastic Preaching*, Leiden, 1998 (Brill's studies in intellectual history, 90), p. 231-253.

(94) On the internal functioning of these exempted orders, see Jörg OBERSTE, *Visitation und Ordensorganisation. Formen sozialer Normierung, Kontrolle und Kommunikation bei Zisterziensern, Prämonstratensern und Cluniazensern (12.-frühes 14. Jahrhundert)*, Münster, 1996 (Vita regularis. Abhandlungen, 2) and Florent CYGLER, *Das Generalkapitel im hohen Mittelalter. Zisterzienser, Prämonstratenser, Kartäuser und Cluniazenser*, Münster, 2001 (Vita regularis. Abhandlungen, 12).

(95) As the aforementioned visitation of Saint-Bertin by the abbot of Saint-Denis shows, the Chapters of the Reims province were attended both by Benedictine houses and by houses of independent canons regular. See *supra*, n. 47 and 56.

(96) See *supra*, n. 16.

of the Chapter, but rather by documents constituting the framework of Saint-Bertin's institutional network of confraternities. No originals of these confraternity agreements – which originated as prayer bonds in the ninth century, but during the course of the twelfth century evolved into contracts, encompassing all sorts of practical arrangements – have been preserved in the archives of Saint-Bertin⁽⁹⁷⁾. However, around 1500, the then-archivist of Saint-Bertin, Allard Tassard, listed 65 houses which he believed had engaged in a confraternity with this abbey⁽⁹⁸⁾. Six of the seven houses where Jacques is known to have preached appear in this list – the only one missing being Ourscamp⁽⁹⁹⁾. This is no coincidence as it can be shown that the existence of these confraternities explains why Jacques was allowed to preside the chapter meetings of the said houses.

Although Tassard's overview only comprises short, undated notices, there are convincing arguments for the assertion that the confraternities finalised between Saint-Bertin and the aforementioned houses preceded the 1230s. At least in the case of Saint-Winnoc, which is mentioned first in the list, a confraternity with Saint-Bertin certainly existed prior to Jacques' abbacy. In an early-twelfth-century chronicle written by Simon of Ghent, abbot of Saint-Bertin between 1131 and 1136, an allusion is made to a bond, characterised by "mutual love" and "the possibility for one to correct the other", which at that time existed between the abbeys of Saint-Bertin and Saint-Winnoc⁽¹⁰⁰⁾. This choice of words leaves no doubt that Simon was trying to describe an institutional relationship which was rooted in a confraternity agreement. Although Simon claimed that this bond had existed ever since the church of Saint-Winnoc was transformed from a secular chapter into a Benedictine monastery by abbot Roderic of Saint-Bertin in 1022, it seems more likely that the confraternity (at least in this form) goes back to the year 1106, when the prior of Saint-Bertin, Hermes, was installed as abbot of Saint-Winnoc

(97) On the general typological evolution of confraternities, see U. BERLIÈRE, *Les fraternités monastiques et leur rôle juridique*, Brussels, 1920 (Mémoires de l'Académie royale de Belgique, Classe des Lettres et des Sciences morales et politiques, sér. 2, vol. 11), p. 3-26.

(98) Saint-Omer, BASO, ms. 746; edited in Oscar BLED, "Les rotuli et rolligeri de l'abbaye de Saint-Bertin à Saint-Omer", in *Bulletin historique et philologique du Comité des Travaux historiques et scientifiques*, 1901, p. 401-412.

(99) The abbey of Cercamp can be recognised in the word *Cercensis*. Probably Tassard misread the actual word saying *Cercampis*. Either way, no abbey is known under the Latin name *Cercensis*. More typos are found in the list. For instance, Tassard speaks of *Sancti Remigii Dumensis*. Obviously, this should be *Remensis*.

(100) O. HOLDER-EGGER, ed., "Simonis gesta abbatum Sancti Bertini Sithiensium", in *MGH SS*, vol. 13, 1881, p. 650: *A quo tempore tanta confederabantur mutuae dilectionis familiaritate hae duae aecclesiae, ut par esset, unam corrigi ab altera*. On this text, see St. VANDERPUTTEN, "Crises of Cenobitism. Abbatial Leadership and Monastic Competition in Late Eleventh-Century Flanders", in St. VANDERPUTTEN, ed., *Reform, Conflict, and the Shaping of Corporate Identities. Collected Studies on Benedictine Monasticism in Medieval Flanders, c. 1050-c. 1150*, Berlin, 2013, p. 3-30.

and the latter temporarily became a daughter house of the former⁽¹⁰¹⁾. In any case, the reference to the competence of Saint-Bertin's abbot to "correct" the monks of Saint-Winnoc cannot be understood but as a licence to lead the chapter meetings in that house from time to time. The historical relationship between Saint-Bertin and the other houses visited by Jacques was less prominent. Nevertheless, it seems that these were linked to Saint-Bertin through a type of confraternity agreement which strongly resembled that of Saint-Winnoc⁽¹⁰²⁾.

This can be deduced from the documentary evidence that is found outside Saint-Bertin's archives. First of all, there is another fifteenth-century document which – like Tassard's manuscript – comprises a list of houses that once concluded a confraternity, only this time with the abbey of Affligem. This so-called *Liber anniversariorum* attests to 62 agreements which, in contrast to those found in Tassard's manuscript, are ranked according to their contents⁽¹⁰³⁾. What is curious is that Saint-Bertin abbey is mentioned in the list, not under the category of 'normal' houses, but as belonging to a select group of houses (10 in total) which were connected with Affligem through *communem ordinem et commune capitulum*. Apart from the list, the anniversary book also contains a summary of the agreement, which indicates that this particular confraternity had been established in the first decades of the twelfth century⁽¹⁰⁴⁾.

(101) Simon's habit to project changes that were initiated in the early-twelfth century on the period of the 1020s is described in St. VANDERPUTTEN, *Monastic Reform as Process: Realities and Representations in Medieval Flanders, 900-1100*, Ithaca-London, 2013, p. 14-30; Tassard describes Saint-Winnoc as "once a daughter house" (*quondam filia*) in his list. This expression might relate to two phases in Saint-Winnoc's history. Saint-Winnoc was originally subjected to Saint-Bertin at the moment it was transformed into a Benedictine abbey in 1022. This resulted in the election of two ex-monks of Saint-Bertin as abbot during the first half of the eleventh century. Yet, a couple of decades after this refoundation the monks of Saint-Winnoc managed to regain their independency by electing non-Bertinian abbots. Only when Hermes was installed as abbot by the Cluniac reformer Lambert of Saint-Bertin (1095-1125) the initial subordination was briefly restored. As such, the successor of Hermes, Thomas, was also a monk of Saint-Bertin. Of the other twelfth-century abbots the origin is unknown – except for Algerus (1130-1148), who had been chosen from the community of Saint-Winnoc itself. This leads to believe that history repeated itself and that Saint-Bertin's grip on Saint-Winnoc gradually weakened in the course of the twelfth century. A brief historical overview of Saint-Winnoc's relation to Saint-Bertin since its (re)foundation up to the early twelfth century is found in Id. "Crises of Cenobitism", *art. cit.*, p. 15-29; regarding Saint-Winnoc's abbots, see *Gallia Christiana*, 16 vol., Parisiis, 1715-1865, vol. 5, col. 334-336.

(102) The remarkable absence of Ourscamp is difficult to explain, but it could be that the original agreement had been lost by the time the list was drawn up. Saint-Bertin's network was certainly larger than Tassard's list leads us to believe. The abbey of Clairvaux is also missing in the list although it is known that this house had established a confraternity with Saint-Bertin before 1192. See Charles TALBOT, "Associations of Clairvaux, Clairmarais and Ter Doest", in *Citeaux in de Nederlanden*, vol. 5, 1954, p. 233-245.

(103) Cyprianus COPPENS, ed., *Liber anniversariorum (1426-1427)*, Hekelgem, 1966 (Fontes Affligemenses, I).

(104) The summary mentions that the confraternity took shape during the abbacies of Lambert (see *supra*, n. 100) and Fulgentius (1087-1122). *Ibid.*, p. 31-34.

A second relevant source is the chapter book of Saint-Remi (twelfth-century / early-thirteenth-century), which likewise preserves a summary of the confraternity that existed between Saint-Bertin and Saint-Remi. Once again it is mentioned that “the chapter will be common” (*capitulum erit commune*)⁽¹⁰⁵⁾. So, what did this denomination mean? The current literature provides few answers to this question and nowhere in the two aforementioned agreements is the notion of common chapter explained⁽¹⁰⁶⁾. However, the chapter book of Saint-Remi contains various other agreements which *do* clarify in what sense the chapter office was considered to be ‘common’. The most precise definition is probably given in the agreement which was concluded with the abbey of Montier-en-Der. The notion *commune capitulum* is described therein as “the mutual permission for the abbots to preside [over] each other’s chapter office and to soften the punishments monks had incurred”⁽¹⁰⁷⁾. The obligation to preach is not explicitly mentioned but, as shown above, by definition the abbots’ presidency over the chapter meetings implied this (at least on Sundays and feast days). Other agreements found in the chapter book contain similar descriptions as that concluded with Montier-en-Der, although it must be noted that, in general, the privilege of the common chapter was considered to be very exclusive. This cannot only be derived from the relatively small number of houses mentioned in the *Liber*

(105) Reims, Bibliothèque municipale, ms. 346 (C. 184), f. 192v. This agreement is undated, but in all likelihood it was concluded during the abbacy of Lambert (just like the confraternities with Saint-Winnoc and Affligem). Not only is Lambert mentioned in the necrology of Saint-Remi (*ibid.*, 160v), the chronicle of Simon (see, *supra* n. 100) also mentions that he was involved in the election of Odo (1118-1151) as abbot of Saint-Remi. See O. HOLDER-EGGER, ed., “Simonis gesta abbatum”, *ed. cit.*, p. 656; fragments of the Reims chapter book are edited in Jean LECLERCQ, “Documents sur la mort des moines, III : les suffrages pour les défunts”, in *Revue Mabillon*, vol. 46, 1956, p. 65-81 ; and Ludwig FALKENSTEIN, “Aquensia aus der Champagne: I. Gebetsvereinigungen der Abtei Saint-Remi unter Berücksichtigung von Mönchen aus Burtscheid und Kornelimünster”, in *Zeitschrift des Aachener Geschichtsvereins*, vol. 84-85, 1977-1978, p. 389-423; see also L. FALKENSTEIN, “Le calendrier des commémoraisons fixes pour les communautés associées à l’abbaye de Saint-Rémi au cours du XII^e siècle”, in Jean-Loup LEMAÎTRE, ed., *L’Église et la mémoire des morts dans la France médiévale. Communications présentées à la Table ronde du CNRS, le 14 juin 1982*, Paris, 1986, p. 23-29.

(106) In studying confraternity agreements Nicolas Huyghebaert noticed a subtle difference between the *societas in choro* on the one hand and the *societas in choro et capitulo* on the other. He concludes with the words: “le rôle du chapitre dans les sociétés de prières serait à étudier de plus près”. See ID., *Les documents nécrologiques*, Turnhout, 1972 (Typologie des sources du Moyen Âge occidental, 4), p. 19.

(107) Reims, Bibliothèque municipale, ms. 346, f. 211v: *Tempore domni Guidonis [...] societas confirmata est. Capitulum commune est. Verum abates predictarum abbatiarum versa vice in singulis ecclesiis capitulum tenere et ligatos sententia poterunt absolvere*. An analogous agreement concluded between the abbeys of Saint-Amand and Saint-Nicaise is cited in Henri PLATELLE, *Le temporel de l’abbaye de Saint-Amand des origines à 1340*, Paris, 1962, p. 182-184.

anniversarium (10 out of 62), but also from the fact that the privilege was sometimes explicitly excluded from the arrangement⁽¹⁰⁸⁾.

To summarise, among the various sorts of confraternities, one in particular figured that resembled the type of filiation which existed between the houses of a single religious order. The principal difference, however, is that common chapter agreements were meant to establish a bond that was based on equality rather than hierarchy⁽¹⁰⁹⁾. Precisely because of the equal nature of these relationships, it is plausible that Jacques was only allowed to soften punishments (as was determined in the agreement between Saint-Remi and Montier-en-Der) and was not really capable of 'correcting' the monks in other houses (as the Cistercian abbots did when visiting houses belonging to their order)⁽¹¹⁰⁾. Furthermore, it is difficult to tell what circumstances had caused Jacques to visit the aforementioned houses. It is possible that the hosting abbots had requested his presence, for example, to resolve internal strife, but Jacques' visitations could also have been ad hoc interventions which were not preceded by any specific cause. In any case, what is certain is that the confraternities required Jacques to be more than just the manager of his own monastic house.

As the above analysis of Jacques' exterior preaching activities shows, by the time the papacy imposed the order as the only relevant organisational model, both Benedictine and non-Benedictine houses were implicated in an alternative form of organisation that not only transcended the boundaries of religious orders, but also interfered with the latter's range of activity. Simultaneously with the development of General Chapters in the Cistercian movement, confraternities evolved into legal instruments that justified supervisory practices between single houses, thereby enabling the establishment of decentralised monastic networks which overlapped with those that were constituted for order-affiliated houses⁽¹¹¹⁾. Further research is needed to clarify exactly how these networks had originated and to what extent they either hindered or supported the workings of the established orders. In the light of this article, however, it is important to note that the alternative 'confraternity model' – which has long escaped the attention of historians – implied the active involvement of Benedictine agents in the supervision of regional monasticism on a supra-monastic level, and that, in

(108) The monks of Marchiennes for example declared that they were willing to share material goods with their associates (the abbeys of Anchin, Hasnon, Tournai and Saint-Amand) but not the chapter office (*excepto capitulo*). See Jean-Pierre GERZAGUET, "Les confraternités de l'abbaye de Marchiennes au Moyen Âge (XII^e-XV^e s.)", in *Revue bénédictine*, vol. 110, 2000, n° 1, p. 346; also, only two out of approximately thirty agreements from this abbey seem to have been of the 'common chapter' type (mentioned as *utriusque capituli communionem*). *Ibid.*, n° 2, p. 346 and n° 13, p. 349.

(109) The choice of words in the *Liber anniversarium*, like the descriptions found in the Reims chapter book, suggest that other abbots were also able to lead the chapter office at Saint-Bertin.

(110) Except in Saint-Winnoc. See *supra*, n. 99.

(111) The hypothesis that confraternities functioned as an alternative to the organisation of the religious orders has already been put forward by Arnoud-Jan BIJSTERVELD & Paul TRIO, "Van gebedsverbodering naar broederschap. De evolutie van het *fraternitas*-begrip in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden in de volle Middeleeuwen", in *Jaarboek voor Middeleeuwse Geschiedenis*, vol. 6, 2003, p. 14-15.

turn, the subsequent expertise was used by the papacy to secure the leadership of the Benedictine General Chapters.

Conclusion

This article set out to reconsider the state of Benedictine monasticism in the turbulent 1230s by looking at the phenomenon of chapter preaching at the abbey of Saint-Bertin. First of all, the above analysis has disproven the common image of the Benedictines as staunchly conservative, or even anti-reformist, monks. Although the Saint-Bertin's customary was modelled on a Cluniac template, in practice the monks were continuously changing their customs according to the new trends in monastic spirituality. Jacques' familiarity with the Bernardian text tradition, and the introduction of Cistercian-inspired changes in observance in both the mid-twelfth-century and the 1230s, both testify to this reality.

Secondly, this study has revealed how active Benedictine resistance to the *Statutes* was both well considered and triggered by political strategy rather than ideological objections. Most likely, the *Statutes* were not observed to the letter in the Benedictine houses due to the latter's desire to pursue a proper disciplinary policy, although there is no reason to believe that this discrepancy between norm and praxis was in any way exceptional.

Last but not least, the scrutiny of this particular collection of sermons has enabled a portrait to be drawn of a Benedictine abbot who played an active role both in the supervisory practices that were coordinated from above as well as in those that were organised from below. This observation not only contradicts the idea that Benedictine agents had become irrelevant in regional religious life; it is also an indication of the openness of Benedictines towards the development of various kinds of supra-monastic organisation. To sum up, this article has paved the way for further research into the question of high medieval Benedictine culture, by showing that the myth surrounding 'Benedictine particularism' is inadequate and stressing some crucial religious-political affairs in which early-thirteenth-century Benedictines were involved.

Appendix: list of sermons contained in ms. 175 (Saint-Omer, BASO)⁽¹¹²⁾

0. (no title): f. 61va-63vb
0. De sancto Andrea: f. 63va-65rb
0. (no title): f. 65rb-65va
0. (no title): f. 65va-67rb
0. (no title): f. 67rb-67va
0. (no title): f. 67va-68rb
0. (no title): f. 68ra-68va
1. Sermo cuiusdam fratris minoris in passione Domini: f. 69ra-71va
2. Item sermo cuiusdam de Domini passione: f. 71va-73va
3. Sermo domini Iacobi quondam abbatis Sancti Bertini de passione Domini: f. 73va-75va
4. Sermo eiusdem de eodem: f. 75va-76vb
5. Sermo in passione Domini: f. 77ra-78ra
6. Sermo in passione Domini: f. 78ra-80ra
7. Item in passione Domini: f. 80ra-81rb
8. Item sermo in passione Domini: f. 81rb-83ra
9. Item in passione Domini: f. 83ra-84ra
10. Sermo in coena Domini: f. 84ra-86rb
11. Item in passione Domini: f. 86rb-88ra
12. Item sermo in passione Domini: f. 88ra-89ra
13. Item sermo in passione Domini in sabbato sancto: f. 89ra-89rb
14. Sermo in Parasceuen: f. 89va-89vb
15. Sermo in vigilia Paschae: f. 90ra-90rb
16. Sermo in festiuitate sancti Bertini: f. 90rb-92ra
17. Item sermo in festiuitate sancti Bertini: f. 92ra-93va
18. Sermo de sancto Bertino: f. 93va-94vb
19. Sermo de sancto Bertino: f. 94vb-96rb
20. Sermo de sancto Bettino: f. 96rb-98rb
21. Sermo in vigilia Natalis Domini: f. 98rb-99va
22. Sermo in Natiuitate Domini: f. 99va-99vb
23. Sermo in annuntiatione Domini: f. 99vb-100va
24. In assumptione beatae Virginis: f. 100va-102ra
25. Item de eodem habitus apud sanctum Remigium: f. 102ra-103ra
26. Item in assumptione beatae Virginis: f. 103ra-104ra
27. Item de eodem: f. 104ra-105ra
28. In purificatione beatae Virginis: f. 105ra-106ra
29. Sermo in assumptione beatae Virginis: f. 106ra-107ra
30. Sermo in purificatione beatae Virginis: f. 107ra-108ra
31. Sermo in assumptione beatae Virginis: f. 108rb-108vb
32. In dedicatione ecclesiae sancti Bertini: f. 108vb-109va
33. In dedicatione ecclesiae: f. 109va-111ra
34. Item de dedicatione et Ascensione: f. 111ra-112va

(112) The titles cited between round brackets are written in pencil by a later hand. This hand likewise added the numbering that is used here. The first seven sermons were not given a number.

35. Sermo in Ascensione Domini habitus apud montem sancti Eligii:
f. 112va-113va
36. In festo apostolorum Petri et Pauli: f. 113va-114va
37. Sermo de Magdalena: f. 114va-115vb
38. Sermo in festo omnium sanctorum: f. 115vb-116ra
39. Item in eodem festo: f. 116ra-116va
40. Sermo de sancto Winnoco: f. 116va-117vb
41. Sermo in die sancti Andrea: f. 117vb-118ra
42. Item sermo in eadem die: f. 118ra-118va
43. Sermo in die sancti Nicholai: f. 118va-119rb
44. Sermo in adventu quando canitur haec antiphona: f. 119rb-119vb
45. Sermo in vigilia natalis Domini: f. 119vb-120vb
46. Sermo in die cinerum: f. 120vb-121rb
47. Item in eodem: f. 121rb-122va
48. Sermo in media quadragesimae: f. 122va-123ra
49. Sermo in Pentecosten: f. 123ra-123va
50. Sermo ad religiosos apud Oscamp: f. 123va-124rb
51. Sermo de sancto Winnoco habitus apud Bergense: f. 124rb-125vb
52. Sermo de nativitate sancti Iohannis habitus apud Chercamp:
f. 125vb-126va
53. Sermo in coena Domini apud sanctum Bertinum: f. 126va-128ra
54. Sermo habitus apud Dunes: f. 128ra-129ra
55. Sermo habitus in capitulo generali: f. 129ra-129vb
56. Ad religiosos: f. 129vb-130vb
57. Ad religiosos: f. 130vb-133rb
58. Sermo ad religiosos habitus apud Afflingem: f. 132rb-133ra
59. Sermo de apostolis Petro et Paulo: f. 133rb-134rb
60. Sermo in festo omnium sanctorum: f. 134rb
61. Sermo in Epiphaniam: f. 134va-135ra
62. De nativitate Domini: f. 135ra-136ra
63. [No title]: f. 136ra-137vb
64. Sermo in ramis palmarum: f. 137vb-138vb
65. De sancto Gregorio: f. 138vb-139vb
66. In die Paschae: f. 140ra-141ra
67. De sancto Benedicto: f. 141ra-141vb
68. De sancto Andrea: f. 141vb-143rb
69. De omnibus sanctis: f. 143rb-144rb
70. De sancto Benedicto: f. 144rb-145rb
71. (De [...]atione [...]dam): f. 145rb-146va
72. (De sancto Folquino): f. 146va-147va
73. (De patre nostro, de sancto B[...]): f. 147va-148rb
74. De omnibus sanctis: f. 148rb-149ra
75. De sancto Bertino: f. 149ra-150ra
76. Ad religiosos: f. 150ra-150vb
77. Item de sancto Benedicto: f. 150vb-151va
78. Confessio: f. 151va-152ra
79. Vt confiteatur: f. 152ra-152vb
80. Vt confiteatur: f. 152vb-153va
81. De coena Domini: f. 153va-154rb

82. De passione Domini: f. 154va-155rb
83. (In festo) Petri et Pauli: f. 155vb-156rb
84. (In festo Petri et Pauli): f. 156rb-157rb
85. (In festo Symonis et Iudae): f. 157rb-159ra
86. (De passione Domini): f. 159ra-160ra
87. (De confessione): f. 160ra-161rb
88. (De sancto Bertino): f. 161rb-162rb
89. (In nativitate Domini): f. 162rb-162va
90. (De sancto Benedicto): f. 162va-163vb
91. (De annuntiatione): f. 163vb-164rb
92. [no title]: f. 164rb-165ra
93. (De adventu Domini): f. 165ra-166ra
94. (In natali Domini): f. 166ra-166rb
95. (In natali Domini): f. 166rb-166vb
96. (De annuntiatione Domini): f. 166vb-167ra
97. (De Epiphania Domini): f. 167ra-167rb
98. (De sancto Benedicto): f. 167rb-167vb
99. De sancto Marco: f. 167vb-168rb
100. [no title]: f. 168rb-168vb
101. (De sancto Bertino): f. 168vb-170ra
102. (De assumptione): f. 170ra-171vb
103. (In annuntiatione Domini): f. 171vb-172ra
104. (De Pentecoste): f. 172ra-172va
105. (De Ascensione): f. 172va-173ra
106. (In die Pentecostes): f. 173ra-173rb
107. (De Ascensione Domini): f. 173rb-173va
108. (De Pentecoste): f. 173va-173vb
109. ([...]): f. 173vb-174rb
110. (De pastoribus saecularibus aut parochialibus): f. 174rb-176va
111. (De parochiali): f. 176va-177vb
112. (De eodem): f. 177vb-179ra
113. (De praelatis ecclesiae): f. 179rb-180rb
114. (De eisdem maioribus et minoribus): f. 180rb-182vb
115. [no title]: f. 183ra-184vb
116. (De eodem): f. 184vb-186va
117. [no title]: f. 186va-187ra
118. [no title]: f. 187ra-187va
119. (In festo purificationis): f. 187va-188va
120. (De eodem): f. 188va-189va
121. (De assumptione): f. 189va-190va
122. (De assumptione): f. 190va-191rb
123. (De assumptione): f. 191rb-192ra
124. (De assumptione): f. 192ra-192va
125. (De assumptione): f. 192va-193va
126. (De sancto Bertino): f. 193v-194vb
127. (In dedicatione ecclesiae): f. 194vb-195vb
128. (In dedicatione): f. 195vb-196vb
129. [no title]: f. 197ra-198ra

ABSTRACT

Johan BELAEN, *Was Benedictine Monasticism Conservative? Evidence from the Sermon Collection of Jacques de Furnes, Abbot of Saint-Bertin (1230-1237)*

The failure of papal attempts to impose the governmental structures of the religious orders on Benedictine monasticism in the early thirteenth century has long been considered a consequence of a typically Benedictine independent attitude. More precisely, traditional scholarship adhered to the notion that the Benedictines resisted these initiatives because of their reluctance to give up judicial autonomy in favour of a supra-monastic form of organisation. By looking at a collection of sermons drafted by Jacques de Furnes, abbot of the Flemish abbey of Saint-Bertin, I aim to reconsider the above views. In so doing, I look at, respectively: Jacques's profile as a preacher; the response of the community of Saint-Bertin to the papal reforms; Jacques's involvement in papal monastic policy; and finally, his role in the coordination of regional monasticism. As such, this study contributes to revising the current narrative on Benedictine institutional development in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries.

Papal Reform – Benedictine Monasticism – Monastic Preaching – General Chapters – Confraternities

RÉSUMÉ

Johan BELAEN, *Le monachisme bénédictin était-il conservateur ? Le témoignage de la collection des sermons de Jacques de Furnes, abbé de Saint-Bertin (1230-1237)*

L'échec des tentatives pontificales d'imposer aux ordres religieux des structures gouvernementales basées sur le monachisme bénédictin au début du XIII^e siècle a longtemps été considéré comme la conséquence d'une attitude d'indépendance typiquement bénédictine. Plus précisément, la recherche traditionnelle a adhéré à l'idée que les bénédictins ont résisté à ces initiatives en raison de leur crainte de devoir renoncer à l'autonomie judiciaire en faveur d'une forme d'organisation supra-monastique. Sur la base d'un recueil de sermons rédigés par Jacques de Furnes, abbé de l'abbaye flamande de Saint-Bertin, je cherche à reconsidérer les vues précédentes. Pour ce faire, j'examine successivement le profil de Jacques comme prédicateur, la réponse de la communauté de Saint-Bertin aux réformes pontificales, l'implication de Jacques dans la politique monastique des papes et son rôle dans la coordination du monachisme régional. Cette étude contribue ainsi à la révision du discours actuel sur le développement institutionnel bénédictin au XII^e et au début du XIII^e siècle.

Réforme pontificale – monachisme bénédictin – prédication monastique – chapitres généraux – confraternités

SAMENVATTING

Johan BELAEN, *Was het benedictijnse kloosterwezen conservatief? De getuigenis van de prekencollectie van Jacques de Furnes, abt van Sint-Bertijns (1230-1237)*

Het falen van vroeg dertiende-eeuwse pauselijke pogingen om de bestuurlijke structuren van de religieuze orden aan de Benedictijnen op te leggen, werd lange tijd beschouwd als een gevolg van een typisch benedictijnse particularistische houding. Meer bepaald hielden historici vast aan het idee dat de benedictijnen zich tegen deze initiatieven hadden verzet omdat ze hun juridische autonomie niet wilden opgeven ten gunste van enige vorm van supra-monastieke organisatie. Via de studie van een prekencollectie opgesteld door Jacques de Furnes, abt van de Vlaamse Sint-Bertijnsabdij, tracht ik de bovenstaande opvattingen te herzien. Ik behandel achtereenvolgens respectievelijk: het profiel van Jacques als predikant; de reactie van de gemeenschap van Sint-Bertijns op de pauselijke maatregelen; de deelname van Jacques in het pauselijk monastiek beleid en zijn rol in de coördinatie van het regionale religieuze leven. Zodoende draagt deze studie bij tot de herziening van het huidige narratief omtrent de institutionele ontwikkelingen in het twaalfde-eeuwse en vroeg dertiende-eeuwse benedictijnse kloosterwezen.

Pauselijke hervorming – benedictijns kloosterwezen – monastieke prediking –
generale kapittels – confraterniteiten